NEWSLETTER
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WELCOME TO THE V8 NEWSLETTER

As the recently elected new Scribe for the V8 Register, I thought I should put pen to paper myself and 'lead by example'. To that end, see my piece on the Multifunction Reversing Light Kit further on in this newsletter. So if you have anythig you think other members would like to read about, do please get in touch and drop me a line. (Details at the top of the page.) It would be great to hear from you!

We sart this month though with a small celebration of the 30 year launch of the RV8.

RV8 – thirty years from the launch

Launched at the British International Motor Show at the NEC in October 1992 to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the MGB and to keep the MG name alive for the revival of the marque, the RV8 was destined to become a classic. All the features of a classic sportscar were there – retro looks and open air motoring with the comfort of a luxurious finish with the very comfortable and supportive Connolly leather seats, elm burr trims and dashboard, plus of course the sheer pleasure of a V8 engine. Only 2,000 RV8s were produced with 79% finished in Woodcote Green and surprisingly 80% were exported to Japan.

The new MG - codenamed ADDER – was developed by a Special Products team based at Gaydon and based on the MGB Heritage bodyshell produced at the Faringdon plant, with subtle bodywork modifications and a revised interior. Under the bonnet the RV8 was powered by a 3.9 litre aluminium Lucas fuel injected V8 with a modern engine management system delivering 190bhp at 4,750rpm through a five speed gearbox and a Quaife differential. Telescopic dampers replaced the original lever arm units but the faithful live axle remained. The new model had a lower, sleeker appearance through a clever combination of suspension and evolutionary styling changes whilst still maintaining the unmistakable character of the classic MGB.

The retro links with the MGB, the best selling sportscar of all time which ceased production some 13 years earlier, are clear but that familiar MGB appearance with subtle styling changes hides the reality – the RV8 was a very new car.

Although the RV8 was conceived and designed to use existing MGB parts as far as possible, the surprising fact is the car contained barely 5% of the original components. Most of the parts, including the engine, gearbox, back axle, electrical systems, body and internal trim were either totally new or adapted from raiding every Rover parts bin the RV8 project engineers could lay their hands on at the time.

The RV8 was aimed at well heeled enthusiasts who had always wanted a classic British open top sports car to drive for pleasure. The press reaction to the RV8 in 1992 was one of puzzlement and although Rover had made a point of emphasing the car was not intended to compete with more modern sportscars, the reviews tried to compare the RV8 with the modern V8 powered TVR Chimera.

Today the RV8 is increasingly popular with its classic style but with modern engineering updates, a luxury internal finish and a bodyshell with vastly better rust proofing than the earlier MGB models. A flow of cars returning from Japan has increased availability of the model in the UK and in Europe and overseas. Good servicing and spares support is available in the UK from two "full service" specialists; the model was also very popular in Australia amd New Zealand.

A key feature of the RV8 market has been the exceptionally low mileages of many cars with 25,000 to 40,000 miles not uncommon. Current RV8 prices continue to be exceptional value for this classic MG. See the recently released 6 monthly update of our RV8 Price Guide on our "More" webpage at: https://www.v8register.net/more.htm

Launching the RV8 at the NEC in 1992

David Knowles recalls “on press day at the 1992 British Motor Show at the NEC, activity around the Rover Group stand was building from early morning ahead of the promissed major event, even if it was the worst kept secret in the British car industry. A crowd gathered round a Perspex-walled circular enclosure at the heart of the Rover stand, keen to see the first MG sports car launch in the nineteen years since the MGBGTV8 and then the closure of the MG Factory at Abingdon. Whilst the show car was at the centre of Rover’s show stand, a separate facility was set up just down the road where committed customers who had parted with their substantial deposits were shepherded and given the chance to sit in another RV8 and shown all the features”.

Even at the launch in 1992, Rover said it was not in the position to supply RV8s ready to be driven out of showrooms. In fact the Cowley project team had only been established in August and the first production cars were not due to be ready for sale until Spring 1993.

Multifunction Reversing Light Kit

I’ve always been keen to keep my V8 as safe as possible, considering modern traffic and driving styles. When I came across a company called Better Car Lighting, run by a knowledgeable chap called Gil Keane (they advertise here in Safety Fast!) I became interested in their reversing light conversion kit, to combine reversing lights with additional braking lights AND fog lights, all in one, by using a clever LED package – and very importantly retaining the original reversing lights and appearance. This ticked several boxes for me. The following is therefore my account of fitting this kit to my V8

The reversing lights on Bs and Cs are marginal, to say the least, compared with modern cars. The early original trick was to increase the size of the festoon bulb from 18w to 21w, resulting in a small improvement, which I did many years ago.) The “MGB/C Multi-Function Revlight Kit Neg” from Better Car Lighting goes so much further than simply improving the reversing light capability of the original unit. The kit doubles (or trebles) up as an additional high intensity brake light, as well as a fog light. All very handy but do they comply with current legislation? I spoke with Gil at some length and found out that he has looked into this aspect of his products heavily, resulting in a considerable amount of due diligence. He has also taken extensive legal advice on the subject, some of which can be found on his website for those who would like to read it at www.bettercarlighting.co.uk

On many modern(ish) cars, there is one bulb for the brake light and one bulb for the rear fog light, both inside the same fitting, so essentially (and visually) it is one light with multiple functions; clearly there are many precedents here. In the case of the MGB V8 situation, if the extra red light function is turned on by the fog light switch, it cannot be operated by the brake light switch and the original brake lights remain unaffected. This is how it would be if left standard, but with auxiliary rear fog lights fitted. In all incandescent bulb standard installations, the brake lights use a 21w filament, so too does the rear fog light (as well as the indicators and reversing lights). The whole point of rear fog lights is to make the vehicle more visible in poor motoring conditions. When the fog lights are on, and the brake lights are applied, the difference is clear and highly visible. The extra brake light function only works when the fog lights are turned off. All very clever!

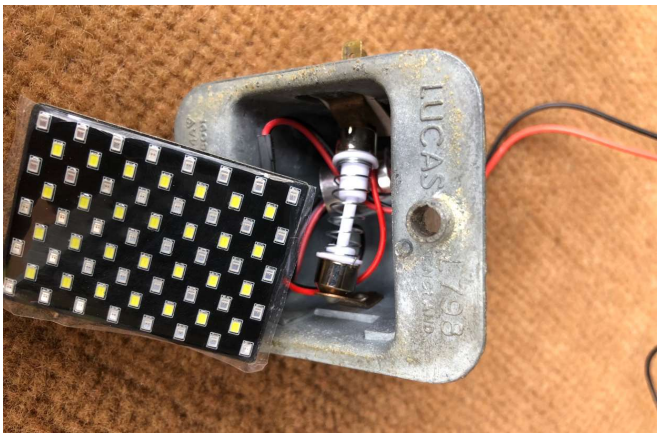
What I particularly like about this unit is the fact that visual originality is retained. Not one for the purists but personally I feel if the safety is improved towards modern day standards, then it has to be worth considering.

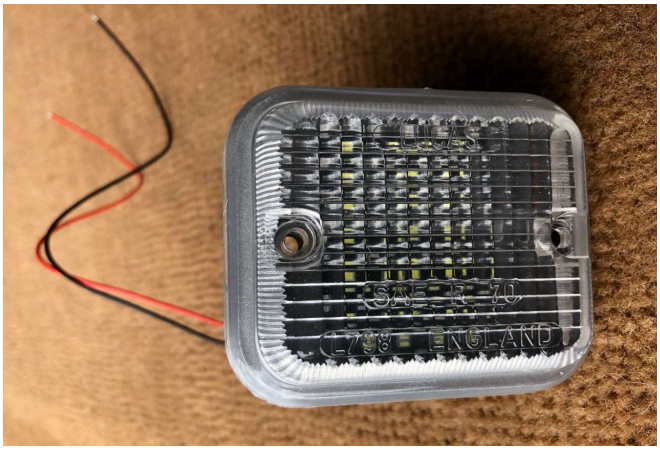
The kit arrived very well packaged, with all components easily identifiable. Each wire has a small self-adhesive tag attached, identifying the purpose of that particular wire and where it should attach. There is a single sheet of ‘fitting tips’, showing all components, although the nature of the written instructions is fairly general, rather than a step-by-step guide. The tips make no specific mention of the original car’s wiring colour codes, as the kit can be fitted to other classic cars. I found this a little vague so I knocked up my own wiring diagram for the specific V8 application – or any MGB/C, running it past Gil, before proceeding. He gave it his blessing and so the conversion could begin.

Being somewhat ‘old school’ in my approach to auto electrics, LED wiring is new to me. The tiny loads involved in powering LEDs (efficient use of power, which is a good thing) means that the wires are very thin. Soldered connections are advised (carefully) although the crimped and scotch-lock connectors provided work well, assuming your V8 boot remains dry.

The first step is to remove your reversing lamps and prepare them for the LED circuit board and wiring. This involves drilling a small hole at the rear of each of the aluminium units for the wiring. The fitting tips state a 10mm hole, although I found a 9mm hole to be a better fit for the provided rubber grommets. There is a small reflector within the original lamp and this will need to be removed to provide extra space for packing the wiring, bulb adaptor, etc. in behind the LED board. There is quite a bit to pack in to the small space, so removal of the reflector is essential! With the new wiring exiting through the grommet, the lamps can be reinstalled in the car. The supplied ring terminal is then attached to the black wire and a suitable earthing point located. I used a nut on top of the main rear lamp fixing point.

Completing the wiring at the rear of the car, a small harness is provided. This connects in to the existing live supply (green with purple tracer) via a diode using one of the scotch-lock connectors. (A more permanent connection can also be used at this point, with soldered joints, if preferred.) Two red tails from the harness connect to the two red wires, one from each of the LED light boards.



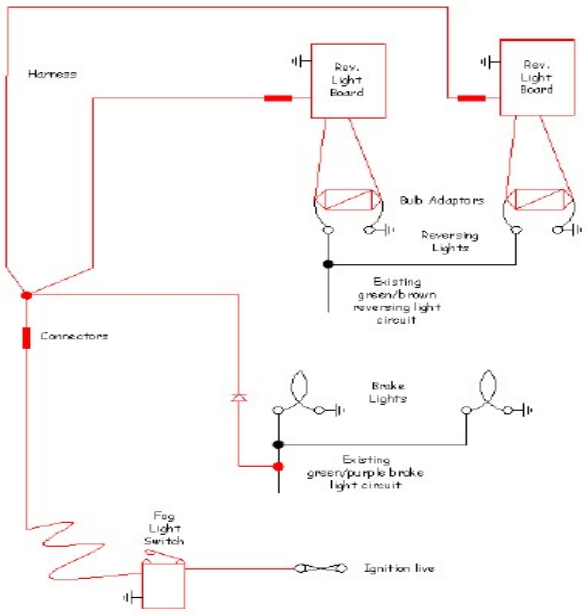


Next task is to fit the fog-light switch in a convenient place in or under the dash and connect to an ignition live feed. The toggle switch is designed to appear in keeping with the original switchgear on the car. It comes pre-wired and has a bright LED, indicating when it is switched on. An optional under-dash mounting bracket is also included, together with all connectors and fittings. A cautionary safety note on the packing requests that the fitter gives some thought towards where the mounting bracket is fitted. The statement reads “In an accident you would have little control over where limbs and kneecaps will go, neither will a passenger.” Worthwhile advice! The long wire is run to the rear of the car and connected to the remaining tail from the supplied harness.

And that really is it. You will now have three lights in one! The reversing lights give a bright ‘white’ light, which, although not to everyone’s taste can certainly be seen very clearly at night – and is much better than the original lights in my opinion. When the brake pedal is applied, the red LEDs within the lamps illuminate at a similar brightness to the existing brake lights. And finally, when the fog light switch is activated, the red LEDs illuminate permanently, giving a clear bright light, clear and distinct from the brake lights.

Standard ‘thin-wall’ wire is used for all in-house manufacturing, although LED factories use thinner wire as the circuit board only has room for such wiring. The difference in thickness has no effect as the loads are small.

The only small criticism I have of the package is that the bulb adaptors, which replace the festoon bulbs are slightly shorter than the original bulbs. This necessitates teasing the connectors within the lamps towards each other slightly to obtain a good fit. The more you ease the connectors, the less they face each other. As previously mentioned, there is a fair amount of wiring etc. to fit into the small lamp, so the bulb adaptors are prone to dislodging. So far, I’ve found the sweet spot for fitting purposes. A recent long trip to the Spa Classic and everything is still working on my return!



The wiring diagram for the B/C/V8 application which I prepared (and Peter Ellis kindly tidied up on his CAD package) is more explanatory than the 'fitting tips' which come with the kit. If you would like a larger copy, please email me and I will send you one.

Replacement RV8 rear lamps available

In the June edition of Safety Fast! we briefly reported on the welcome return on the availability of the RV8 rear lamp assemblies.

Many RV8 owners have endured the frustration of having a broken rear lamp and being unable to get a replacement have in some cases not been able to get an MOT pass and take their car out on public roads. The good news is RV8 enthusiast Jim Greenhill and RV8 spares specialist Clive Wheatley have now got a new supply of RV8 rear lamps made using modern 3D printing technology. The new units are available from Clive Wheatley mgv8parts. Priority was given to V8 Members with a damaged RV8 rear lamp unit which had caused an MOT failure. With this welcome news they have been able to repair their car and then remove the frustration of their not being able to enjoy driving their RV8 on the roads. Now Clive is offering replacement rear lamp units to RV8 owners who would like to have one as a prudent spares item just in case one of their rear lamps is damaged, typically by a clumsy driver parking nearby. See the 'More' webpage at: https://www.v8register.net/more.htm

Major V8 anniversaries year in 2023

In 2023 we will have three significant anniveraries: the 50th anniversary of the launch of the MGBGTV8 model in August 1973, the 45th anniversary of the formation of the V8 Register five years later in 1978 and the 30th anniverary of the start of RV8 production in 1993.

The MGBGTV8 was launched in August 1973 at the Motor Show at Earls Court in London. The V8s featured at the show were Citron 0798 on display on a ramp with the logo "the new 124mph MGB GT V8" and Aconite 0799 on the stand. A video clip which catches the period style of motor show reporting with references to the "window dressing more or less as before!" is available on the "More" webpage.

Above left to right: John Dupont, Alan Kingwell, Geoff Allen, Jerry Bright, Charles Williams, Howard Gosling, Peter Beadle, Tony Hilton, Victor Smith and Mike Maude-Roxby. Jim Gibson, Tom Studer and Eric Prasse were at this initial meeting but somehow missed the photo.

The 45th anniversary of the launch of the V8 Register in October 1978 is a significant milestone and the first meeting of the V8 Register was held at the Crossroads Inn at Weedon Bec on the A5,north of Towcester on the Saturday of the MG Car Club's annual meeting at Silverstone in May 1979.

MGBV8-50 event at Gaydon

A major event celebrating the 50th anniverary of the launch of the MGBGTV8 model is planned for Sunday 20th August 2023 at Gayon with a dedicated parking area alongside the Gaydon museum building and a dedicated room within the building with several presentations on both the MGBGTV8 and RV8 models. Julian Holmes has volunteered to lead the planning and arranging of this event and further details will be available later this year, including their release on our "More" webpage. This will help Overseas V8 members plan their visit to the UK for this anniversary event.

Electronic ignition gremlin

Mike Russell posted a report on the V8 Bulletin Board stating "following perfect running for months after some ignition system fettling late last year, I suddenly couldn't get the MGBGTV8 to start. Fortunately, it was in the garage but if it had been out and about it would have been a real problem. Cutting a long story short, my aluminium cased Lumenition electronic ignition system, fitted before I got the car in 1996, is fixed to the bulkhead by two self-tapping steel screws one of which serves as the earth point".

Mike began studying the Lumenition installation guide that he found online. He checked and cleaned all the connections. He then removed the two steel self-tapping screws which secure the case to the bulkhead. He noticed the screw threads were seriously corroded. He cleaned them, together with the earth connection, and reassembled. He wondered what to do next but on starting the car it fired up easily - much to his relief.

Mike could see the steel screw and the earthing link with the bulkhead had developed corrosion. It took many years to develop as a problem, but with the connections cleaned up Mike feels they should be good for many years to come. So, whilst it was eventually a simple problem to solve, Mike feels a preventative clean-up of self-tappers securing earth connections might be a wise step to avoid the gremlin he faced with a classic car nearing 50 years old. See the 'More' webpage for additional pictures and wiring diagram.